

## ***FESTUCA ROEMERI - SERICOCARPUS RIGIDUS***

Roemer's fescue - white-top aster

Abbreviated Name: FERO-SERI

Synonym: *Festuca idahoensis* var. *roemerii* - *Aster curtus*

Sample size = 20 plots

**DISTRIBUTION:** This association represents most of what remains of native prairies in the southern Puget Sound area. Historically, there were probably other native prairie associations in this area. It is located in southwestern Pierce County, Thurston County, and the Chehalis River valley in the far eastern end of Grays Harbor County. It probably formerly also occurred in Lewis County in the vicinity of Centralia, and may have occurred on prairie soils in Mason County.

**GLOBAL/STATE STATUS:** G1S1. There are less than 20 remaining occurrences and they are highly threatened by invasion of non-native species, fire suppression, and development.

**ID TIPS:** Dominated or co-dominated by Roemer's fescue. White-top aster, houndstongue hawkweed, prairie lupine, Idaho blue-eyed grass, or sickle-keeled lupine usually present. Level or mounded topography on glacial outwash in southern Puget Sound area.

**ENVIRONMENT:** These sites are moderately dry and appear to be relatively nutrient-rich. Occurs on flat or mounded (Mima mounds) plains of recessional glacial outwash. Soils are deep and excessively drained, typically gravelly or extremely gravelly sandy loam in texture.

**Precipitation:** 38-64 inches (mean 50)

**Elevation:** 50-560 feet

**Aspect/slope:** level or mounded

**Slope position:** plains

**Soil series:** Spanaway, Spanaway-Nisqually complex

**DISTURBANCE/SUCCESSION:** Historically maintained as open prairie by indigenous human burning practices. In the absence of fire or other control, Douglas-fir commonly establishes and a forest eventually develops. Douglas-fir savanna or woodland can be an intermediate stage of succession.

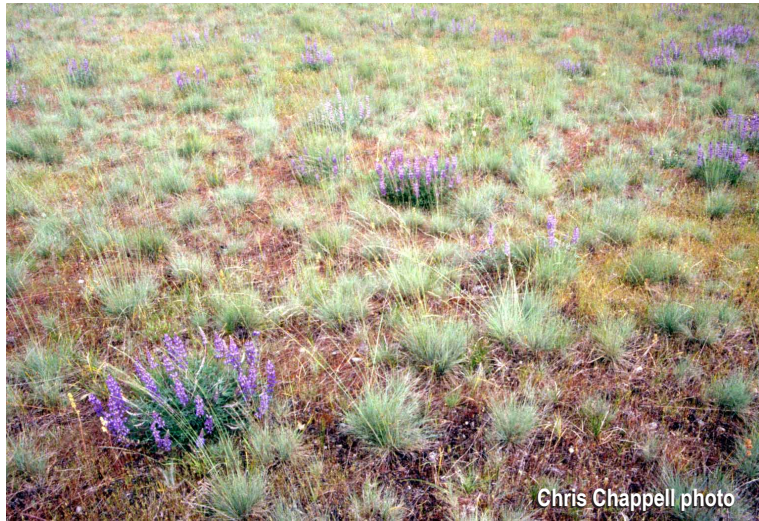
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### **Vegetation Composition Table (selected species):**

Con = constancy, the percent of plots within which each species was found;  
Cov = cover, the mean crown cover of the species in plots where it was found.

<b>Shrubs, Subshrubs</b>	<b>Kartesz 2003 Name</b>	<b>Con</b>	<b>Cov</b>
Scot's broom	Cytisus scoparius	75	4
<b>Graminoids</b>			
Roemer's fescue	Festuca roemerii	100	44
long-stolon sedge	Carex inops ssp. inops	90	5
colonial bentgrass	Agrostis capillaris	80	8
wood-rush	Luzula (comosa, multiflora ssp. multiflora)	80	1
Kentucky bluegrass	Poa pratensis	75	3
common velvet grass	Holcus lanatus	75	2
California danthonia	Danthonia californica	70	2
prairie junegrass	Koeleria macrantha	50	1
<b>Forbs and Ferns</b>			
hairy cat's-ear	Hypochaeris radicata	100	8
woolly sunflower	Eriophyllum lanatum var. lanatum	100	3
white-top aster	Sericocarpus rigidus	85	4
houndstongue hawkweed	Hieracium cynoglossoides	85	3
yarrow	Achillea millefolium var. occidentale	85	1
common St. John's-wort	Hypericum perforatum	85	1
sheep sorrel	Rumex acetosella	85	1
common camas	Camassia quamash var. azurea	80	6
common shepherd's-cress	Teesdalia nudicaulis	80	1
oxeye daisy	Leucanthemum vulgare	75	4
western buttercup	Ranunculus occidentalis var. occidentalis	75	1
spring-gold	Lomatium utriculatum	70	1
English plantain	Plantago lanceolata	65	3
graceful cinquefoil	Potentilla gracilis var. gracilis	65	2
meadow death camas	Zigadenus venenosus var. venenosus	65	1
dune goldenrod	Solidago simplex ssp. simplex var. simplex	60	2
self-heal	Prunella vulgaris ssp.lanceolata	60	1
cut-leaf microseris	Microseris laciniata ssp. laciniata	60	1
prairie lupine	Lupinus lepidus	60	+
early blue violet	Viola adunca var. adunca	55	3
bracken fern	Pteridium aquilinum var. pubescens	50	6
common strawberry	Fragaria virginiana ssp. platypetala	50	4
Idaho blue-eyed grass	Sisyrinchium idahoense	40	+
chocolate lily	Fritillaria affinis var. affinis	35	+
Henderson's shootingstar	Dodecatheon hendersonii	30	2
sickle-keeled lupine	Lupinus albicaulis	25	3
Puget balsamroot	Balsamorhiza deltoidea	25	2
field chickweed	Cerastium arvense ssp. strictum	20	1

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Chris Chappell photo

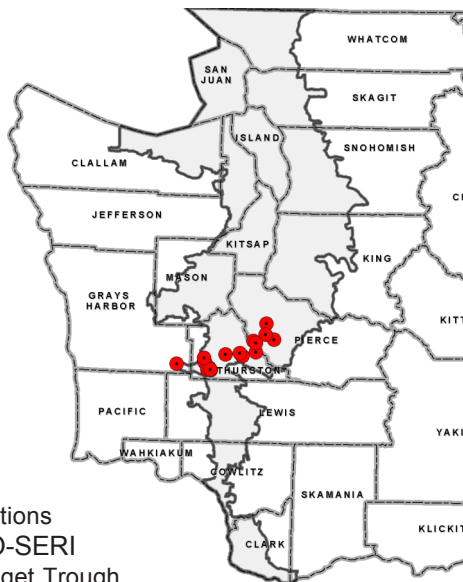
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**VEGETATION:** This is a grassland, dominated or co-dominated by the bunchgrass Roemer's fescue. The most abundant native forb is usually common camas, though its cover varies dramatically according to season. Bracken fern can also be very prominent but is less frequent. Important native indicators for this association that help to distinguish it from others are white-top aster, houndstongue hawkweed, prairie lupine, and Idaho blue-eyed grass. Mosses and lichens often cover the space between grasses and forbs, though with regular fires they are less abundant. Yarrow, long-stolon sedge, woolly sunflower, California danthonia, spring-gold, western buttercup and graceful cinquefoil have high constancy. Common non-native species are tall oatgrass, colonial bentgrass, Scot's broom, Kentucky bluegrass, hairy cat's-ear, common shepherd's-cress, common St.-Johns-wort, common velvetgrass, English plantain, and sheep sorrel. Puget balsamroot and sickle-keeled lupine are relatively infrequent but occasionally contribute substantial cover.

**CLASSIFICATION NOTES:** Chappell and Crawford (1997) also describe this association. Lang (1961), Giles (1970), del Moral and Deardorff (1976), and Dorner (1999) all describe portions or aspects of this vegetation. Overall composition differs from similar associations because of an assemblage of forbs that are largely absent from other Roemer's fescue grasslands.

**MANAGEMENT NOTES:** Maintenance of grassland structure requires active control of invasive trees (e.g., Douglas-fir) and shrubs (e.g., Scot's broom). In addition, the enrichment of soils by Scot's broom, a nitrogen fixer, appears to facilitate non-native herbaceous species invasion. Native species composition is threatened by apparent ongoing increase and expansion of non-native grasses (especially tall oatgrass).

**BIODIVERSITY NOTES:** The following listed or candidate species for federal or state status (endangered, threatened, sensitive) are found in this plant association: western pocket gopher (*Thomomys mazama*), Taylor's checkerspot (*Euphydryas editha taylori*), mardon skipper (*Polites mardon*), Puget blue (*Plebejus icarioides blackmorei*), valley silverspot (*Speyeria zerene bremnerii*), Oregon vesper sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus affinis*), golden paintbrush (*Castilleja levisecta*), rose checkermallow (*Sidalcea malviflora* ssp. *virgata*), and white-top aster. Many rather more common, though probably declining, plant species are strongly associated with this plant association.



Plot locations  
of FER0-SERI  
in the Puget Trough